

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

127-0000-0040

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Big John Farm Limestone Bank Barnother names/site number Same

2. Location

street & number NW¹/₄, NW¹/₄, SE¹/₄, SE¹/₄, S7, T16, R9☐ not for publicationcity, town Council Grove☒ vicinitystate Kansascode KScounty Morriscode 127zip code 66846

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

☐ private☒ public-local☐ public-State☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

☒ building(s)☐ district☐ site☐ structure☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

Noncontributing

 buildings sites structures objects1 Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/ANumber of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this
☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Ramon Powers State Historic Preservation Officer Sept. 7, 1990

Signature of certifying official

Date

Kansas State Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined eligible for the National
Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.☐ removed from the National Register.☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agricultural/Subsistence:

Animal facility: barn

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Agricultural/Subsistence:

Animal facility: barn

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other: limestone bank barn

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone: limestone

walls Stone: limestone

roof Wood: shingle, metal: aluminum

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Big John Farm Limestone Bank Barn (c. 1871-1872) is located on the NW 1/4, NW 1/4, SE 1/4, SE 1/4, S. 7, T. 16, R. 9 in Township I, Morris County, Kansas about a mile east of Council Grove, just north of Highway 56. The limestone bank barn is built into an earthen rise that runs approximately from east to west. The barn measures seventy-six feet from east to west and forty feet from north to south and measures forty feet to the peak. The stone walls are two feet thick. The barn is framed with an unusual double truss design made of native oak. The load bearing, limestone walls are built around the framing system. Cedar shingles cover the barn's southern roof slope, metal sheeting covers the barn's northern roof slope.

Severe structural problems threaten the barn, since Fall 1989 the south and east walls have been supported with wooden braces. The west end of the upper story of the barn collapsed in 1928, breaking the floor and damaging the west wall; this damage has been partially repaired. The barn has been repointed various times with various types of cements.

Two Santa Fe Trail routes lead into Council Grove, one followed what is now Highway 56 and the second sloped down about a half a mile to the south. The barn is visible from the highway but not visible from the southern route. Big John Creek runs right through the property, with Fremont's Spring just south of it across the highway. A private dirt road intersects with the highway and leads to the barn. The county land just south of the barn is a closed sanitary landfill.

The barn's southern elevation is defined by a row of vertical, rectangular vents on both the lower and upper stories. A doorway pierces each level, one above the other, in a slightly off centered location. A rectangular limestone lintel surmounts each doorway. The lower doorway retains its wooden, vertical plank door. The upper doorway no longer retains its door. The doorways are framed in wood. Severe collapse of the limestone masonry is evident on the southeastern corner of the barn. Tie rod bars are visible on both the east and west corners of the southern elevation.

The barn's eastern elevation is defined by a centrally located doorway surmounted by a flat poured concrete lintel. A buttress like member projects from the northern side of the doorway. The interior of the doorway is framed in wood. The original wooden plank doors are nonextant. The south corner of

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the elevation evidences structural failure. Two tie rod bars are visible on the south corner of the barn.

The barn's northern elevation is defined by a large, centrally located opening that has been infilled with wooden planks and metal sheets. Two windows flank the doorway, underscored by limestone sills and surmounted by limestone lintels. The windows are framed in wood. The western window retains its wooden vertical plank shutter. Structural failure of the limestone has occurred under the eastern window. Tie rod bars are visible on both the east and west corners of the building.

The barn's western elevation is defined by a centrally located doorway surmounted by a sagging wooden member. A limestone block jack arch surmounts this member. The doorway is framed with wood and no longer retains its door. Tie rod bars are visible on both the north and south corners of the barn. The rubble infill repair from the 1928 collapse of the upper portion of the wall is apparent.

The interior of the barn is defined by a lower level and an upper loft level. On the lower level, the floor joists run north to south and show signs of bending along the northern wall below the doorway. Hewn timber posts support the loft floor. Large hewn beams act as cross members in the structural support of the loft floor. One animal stall remains on the lower level. The floor on the lower level is dirt. The barn's upper loft level is defined by several built in ladders and the double trussing system. Tie rods run against the walls and from gable end to gable end.

While the barn does suffer from severe structural problems the stone walls can be reconstructed and the settling problems can be solved. The barn retains a moderate degree of structural and architectural integrity.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1871-1872

Significant Dates

1871-1872

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Big John Farm Limestone Bank Barn (c. 1871-1872) is being nominated to the National Register under criterion C for its architectural significance as a limestone bank barn. The barn is built into an earthen rise that runs approximately from east to west. The barn measures seventy-six feet from east to west and forty feet from north to south and measures forty feet to the peak. The stone walls are two feet thick. The barn is framed with an unusual double truss design made of native oak.

Bank barns are commonly associated with Amish farms in Pennsylvania but are frequently found in other parts of the country. This is an old building type that has Western European antecedents. The Big John Farm Limestone Bank Barn is one of few extant bank barns in Morris County, Kansas. The internal double truss design supports the roof, the load bearing, limestone walls are built around it. This type of construction has not been found in any other extant Morris County bank barns. The barn stands as the only remaining building that comprised the Morris County Poor Farm.

The barn is located on the NW 1/4, NW 1/4, SE 1/4, SE 1/4, S. 7, T. 16, R. 9 in Township I, Morris County, Kansas about a mile east of Council Grove, just north of Highway 56. A private dirt road intersects with the highway and leads to the barn. The county land to the south of the barn is a closed sanitary land fill.

Two Santa Fe Trail routes lead into Council Grove, one followed what is now Highway 56 and the second sloped down about a half a mile to the south. The barn is visible from the highway but not visible from the southern route. Big John Creek runs right through the property, with Fremont's Spring just south of it across the highway.

Seth M. Hays (1811-1873), the pioneer settler of Council Grove, purchased the property from Robert Gillespie in 1867 for \$100. Gillespie has received a patent deed for the property from the United States Government in 1866. An 1894 Council Grove Republican newspaper account of Hays' ownership of the farm credits him with improvements, noting that, "He took pride in the place and

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spent a great deal of money in improvements." The sale of this property, known as Big John Farm, occurred in 1877. The farm's 160 acres were appraised at \$2275. The appraisal and the newspaper account would both indicate that Hays very well may have been responsible for the barn among other improvements during the short time that he owned the property.

The property sold ten times after that until it was transferred to Morris County in 1889 from Henry T. Hamer for \$6000. It is unlikely that any of the ten people who owned the property during the twelve years between its sale as part of the Hays estate in 1877 and its sale to Morris County were responsible for any significant improvements to the property, such as the construction of a massive stone barn. The property was purchased by the county as a poor farm.

The first written references to the barn are found in an April 15, 1892 entry and a July 8, 1892 entry in Book F of the Morris County Commission Minutes. The entries deal with iron and bridging repair work to the barn and the construction of a small house. Presumably a newer barn would not need iron and bridging repair work done to it, so again this supports the thesis that Hays may have constructed the barn during his ownership of the property, although the barn would have only been twenty years old in 1892. To date, there is little historical evidence to support an argument which would place the barn's construction within a time frame that would presume an active association with the Santa Fe Trail.

An extensive article lauding the Morris County Commission for the acquisition of the Big John Farm was published in an 1894 edition of the Council Grove Republican. A particularly descriptive section from that article follows:

"A few days ago the editors of the Republican rode out to the Morris county poor farm which is located a couple miles east of town on Big John. The Commissioners of the county did a wise thing when they purchased that splendid farm for \$6000. There are two hundred acres of as pretty a bottom farm as there is to be found in the county. It is nearly all bottom and under plow, only a very small portion of a hill is used for pasture. There are numerous buildings on the place; the largest house could not be built for \$1000. The immense stone barn cost \$3000 and is surely worth \$2000. Just in these two items is one-half the purchase price. There is four and a half miles of fine stone fence on the farm, and considerable wire, rail and board fence in addition. There is a quantity of old, bearing trees of the finest varieties and this year they will bring in good returns. All the vegetables needed on the farm are raised on the place and a number of hogs are fattened each year for meat. The products not used on the place are sold and proceeds turned into the county treasury

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L.S. Collins who is overseer of the poor and superintendent of the farm has enough work to keep a half a dozen men busy. It is our opinion that he has too much for one man entirely. There is always a number of inmates there and such cases are invariably worse than babies and in reality need the constant care of an attendant. But Mr. Collins does this as well as to do all the hard work on the big farm, plowing, keeping up fences, attending to stock, planting, harvesting, and the like . . . Mr. Collin's family consists of himself, wife, and boy."

The barn fulfilled the poor farm's needs until 1945 when the farm was leased out. A 1918 inventory of the poor farm lists a variety of livestock, two wagons, and many agricultural tools. An oral interview conducted in 1990 revealed that the weight of stored corn caused the west end of the upper story of the barn to collapse in 1928, breaking the floor and damaging the west wall.

The barn had been underused and not very well maintained for many years. A group representing the local chapter of the Santa Fe Trail Association, the Morris County Historical Society, the Council Grove Chamber of Commerce, the Community Arts Council, the Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Greater Morris County Development Corporation, and the Morris County Commission has formed to explore the restoration and reuse of the barn. Since Fall, 1989 the south and east walls have been supported with wooden braces. The group has received a Preservation Services grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to hire an architect or engineer to identify and solve all structural problems affecting the barn.

While the barn does suffer from severe structural problems the stone walls can be reconstructed and the settling problems can be solved. The barn retains a moderate degree of structural and architectural integrity.

9. Major Bibliographical Reference

Council Grove, Kansas Republican, 1894.

Duffus, R.L. The Santa Fe Trail. (New York: Longmans, Green, 1930).

Morris County, Kansas Commissioners Minutes, 1889-1949.

Morris County, Kansas Register of Deeds, 1866-1980.

Ogle, George. Morris County, Kansas Atlas, 1901, 1923.

Richmond, Robert W. Kansas: A Land of Contrasts. (St. Charles: Forum, 1974).

☒ See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository:

Kansas State Historical Society

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one acre

UTM References

A 14 722025 4282885
Zone Easting Northing

C

B
Zone Easting Northing

D

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is located on the NW¹/₄, NW¹/₄, SE¹/₄, SE¹/₄, S7, T16, R9 in Morris County, Kansas on a tract measuring 96' x 60'; whose northeast corner is 14.1' directly northeast of the northeast corner of the barn's foundation. Beginning at the northeast corner of the parcel to the boundary proceeds 60' south, 96' west, 60' north, and 96' east to the point of beginning.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated property is located on a 200 acre tract that was in agricultural until 1945. After that time parts of the land were used by Morris County as a land fill; this land fill has been closed. The barn was once part of a farm with other buildings, it is the only extant structure associated with the farm. The barn's dimensions are 76' x 40', a 10' perimeter of ground bounds the building on all sides.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Martha Hagedorn-Krass, Architectural Historian

organization Kansas State Historical Society date September 7, 1990

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city or town Topeka state Kansas zip code 66612

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Stocking, Hobart E. The Road to Santa Fe. (New York: Hastings House, 1971).

U.S. Census, 1900, 1910.

BIG JOHN FARM
LIMESTONE
BANK BARN
COUNCIL GROVE, KS.
COUNCIL GROVE QUAD
UTM COORDINATES
14 722025
4282885

